

unforgiving economy. Observing the divided landscape of modern America, we need especially to entertain the possibility that “conservative” family values can be nurtured in one of two ways: either through healthy ecosystems in which social institutions and practices are sustained through the shared efforts of people blessed with economic success and those less fortunate, or through the ability to afford practical replacements for such a social ecosystem in their absence. Remarkably, it seems reasonable to conclude that conservative values today support liberal policy and belief because they are the greatest advantage for economic winners and social liberals over the remnant of society that might once have presented an alternative to such views and policy. Those most willing to rent U-Hauls took not only the furniture but also the social ecology in which economic losers might sustain family values.

If nothing else, the exceedingly narrow

victory of Donald Trump may be understood as the last gasp of a dying conservatism that has been destroyed by American liberalism. That “instinctive understanding of inherent limits” may be the animating attraction to a vision of Trump’s promises for a nation with a border and a common culture; a foreign policy largely defensive instead of a *de facto* empire; a capital drained of cronies and riggers; and the liberty to call things as they really are, including men, women, and children. Yet protection of this instinct was given to a man with no apparent conservative values or vision, less a sign of hope than desperation. Conservatism may have a future in America, but it will arise most likely from families and intentional communities that live as a counterculture to self-immolating American liberalism, and not as something that will be created in a political laboratory by the educated or from the wreckage of a Flight 93 administration in Washington, D.C. †

At the Lake House

James Matthew Wilson

They pulled me from my sleep in the low bunk,
 My mother and grandmother, in one’s arms
 While the other draped me with a garbage bag.
 We moved as one through the dark
 house, which shook
 Beneath the brunt of wind and the hard tack
 Of rain on glass, down through
 the pried-back shingles.

Toted like that, I saw recede behind us
 The barrel trunk of a black walnut, fallen
 From where its fellows towered among the air
 With leaves turned wild and
 raving gorgons’ heads.
 It lay there, settled, slumbering,
 its neck propped
 Upon the roof’s slick, lacerated back.

They carried me into the neighbors’ house,
 Where, days before, in much
 more measured winds,
 I’d brought a snapping turtle as a gift,
 Its young neck straining from
 the shell. And there,
 I found it, in a fish bowl, starving, food
 It wouldn’t touch adrift about its head.

For all of nature’s fierce and darksome visage,
 I’d caught her spawn within
 my grasp and held it,
 Plucked from the angled
 boatlift where it sunned
 Above still water. Staring on it now,
 I asked and was allowed to carry it out
 Into the beating storm to set it free.